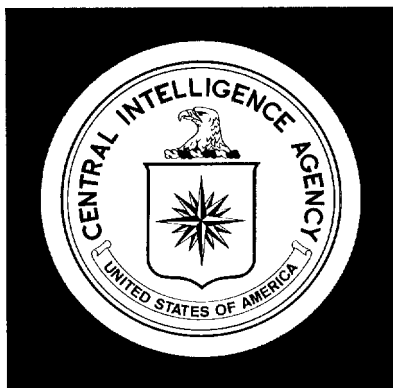


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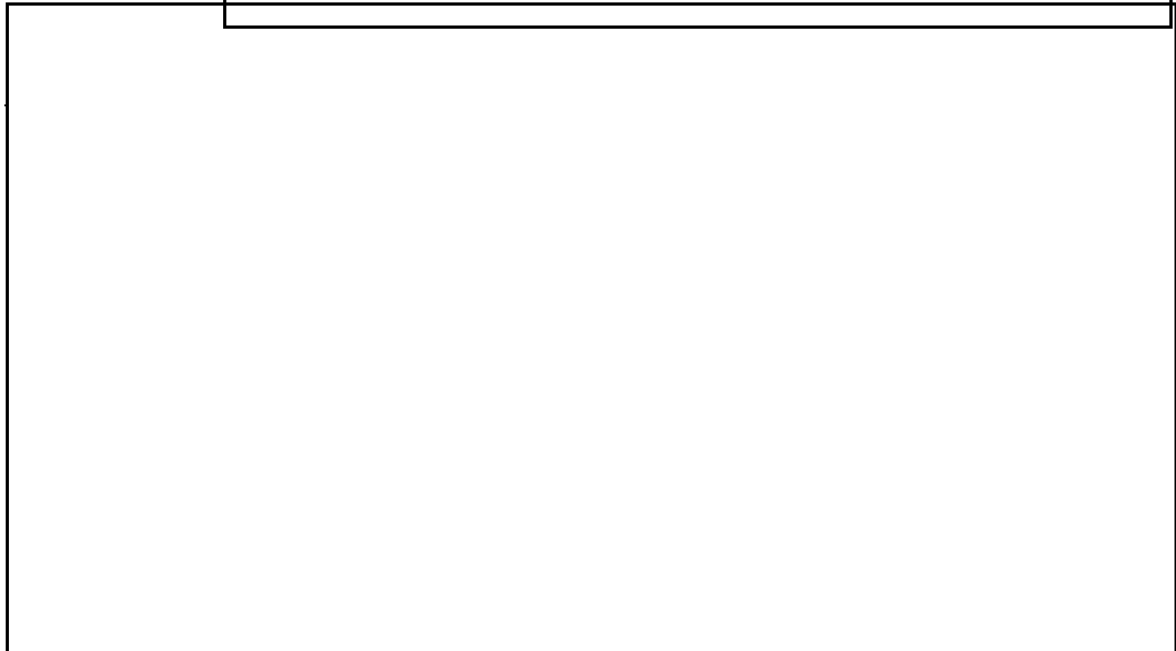
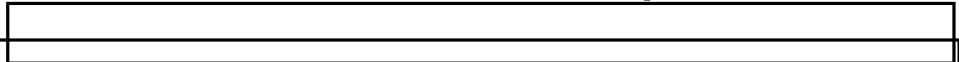
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LAOS: Communists show interest in moving ahead in
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LAOS: THE COMMUNISTS ARE SHOWING A NEW INTEREST IN MOVING AHEAD ON A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

ON 19 JULY THE SENIOR LAO COMMUNIST NEGOTIATOR, PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED AUTHORIZATION FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN SAM NEUA TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON POLITICAL ASPECTS OF A SETTLEMENT IF VIENTIANE WOULD RECIPROCATATE BY CHANGING ITS POSITIONS ON CERTAIN MILITARY POINTS. HE ALSO INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO SCALE DOWN HIS EARLIER DEMANDS FOR THE STATIONING OF LARGE COMMUNIST SECURITY FORCES NEAR VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG--AN ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN A MAJOR STICKING POINT IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. SUGGESTING THAT A FINAL AGREEMENT NEED NOT AWAIT RESOLUTION OF THE CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, PHOUMI DECLARED, "PERHAPS A LAOS SETTLEMENT CAN SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHER INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES."

AS THE RESULT OF PHOUMI'S CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE, PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA HAS DIRECTED HIS NEGOTIATOR, PHENG PHONGSAVAN, TO BEGIN DRAFTING NEW LANGUAGE ON ISSUES STILL IN DISPUTE. BEFORE SUBMITTING IT TO THE COMMUNISTS, PHENG IS TO DISCUSS HIS DRAFT WITH SENIOR LAO ARMY OFFICERS AND WITH RIGHTIST LEADER NGON SANANIKONE, ALL OF WHOM ARE SURE TO BALK AT ANY FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO THE COMMUNISTS. IF, HOWEVER, SOUVANNA BELIEVES HE HAS THE BEST AGREEMENT HE CAN REASONABLY EXPECT, HE WOULD PROBABLY BE PREPARED TO BRAVE CRITICISM ON THE RIGHT AND INSTRUCT PHENG TO SIGN A FINAL AGREEMENT.

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